

Dear Madam Chair and Members of the Local Government Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. For the record, my name is Shyla Patera. I work at North Central Independent Living Services in Black Eagle, MT as an Independent Living Specialist. The primary focus of my job is transportation advocacy. Each day I work to educate my fellow peers about transportation advocacy. The one thing that I can be certain of is there are a lot of passionate advocates on behalf of Transportation. I thank Senator Schmidt for introducing Senate Bill 160 so that we can have an open and honest debate about transportation. However, I oppose Senate Bill 160. For the past fourteen months, I have tried to increase participation by advocates with disabilities on my local Transportation Advisory Committee. Like most citizens, I have tried to listen and observe. I acknowledge the argument of the proponents who say we need more money, but Senate Bill 160 will not accomplish this! At first, I had questions about the integrity of the TransAde program. If we opened up funds, would the funds serve Seniors and people with disabilities as the TransAde Program had intended. . I first worried about subsection 6 of the bill as it exempts the State From Coordination requirements outlined in the Federal Highway bill. I, and others on TACS have been hearing about the State's plan for consolidation I then restudied the circulars and discovered that the consolidation plan was only for the insular states and territories. I also rediscovered something that I had learned during my on the job training . The flexibility of states, 5311 and 5307's to transfer monies already exists as long as the monies are to be used on behalf of 5310, New Freedom and Job Access Reverse Commute programs. Put into plain English that means Rural Public Providers such as Valley County Transit and Small Urban providers such as Great Falls Transit can already request funds to be transferred as long as they outline those requests in coordinated plan and follow the guidelines of the 3 circulars. That means these plans must serve the citizens for which the circulars are intended.

I am wondering if there are problems with an administrative rule making process that needs to be amended rather than pass SB 160? As a citizen,. I expect these issues to be thoroughly debated and discussed..